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Talking Points for DDI
Chad-Libya-France: Status of the War

9 January 1987

Tripoli is trying to salvage its position in Chad while facing increasing pressure from N'Djamena and Paris. Qadhafi probably believes that some quick military success in Chad is needed both to develop a strong bargaining position in the war and to protect his regime from a domestic backlash.

The collapse of the Libyan garrison at Fada in the face of a Chadian Government offensive was the most costly single defeat for Tripoli since its ill-fated Uganda intervention in 1979.

-- Libyan troops at Fada broke and ran after offering little resistance. [REDACTED]

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-- Libyan casualties almost certainly ran into the hundreds, although N'Djamena's claim that 780 were killed is probably exaggerated. [REDACTED]

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The defeat at Fada almost certainly will aggravate discontent in Libya--particularly the Libyan military--over involvement in Chad. [REDACTED] the Libyan public has been increasingly concerned about the prospect of casualties in Chad and that renewed combat there last month prompted a dramatic increase in military desertions.

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-- The Libyan press continues to deny a large Libyan presence in Chad in an effort to keep the scope of the Fada defeat from the public.

-- Nonetheless, the Libyan Armed Forces will probably view the fall of Fada as another debacle brought on by Qadhafi for which the Army pays the price.

-- Another military humiliation with heavy

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casualties could well spur coup plotting against Qadhafi.

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Qadhafi probably anticipated that his forces could quickly subdue the Chadians north of the 16th Parallel. The Fada defeat, however, almost certainly has prompted him to question whether the Libyan force can even hold its ground. There are indications that Tripoli is now taking the war much more seriously.

-- Libyan reserves have been mobilized, almost certainly to make additional reinforcements available for the Chad war.

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We believe Qadhafi for the moment will look for an opportunity to hand Habre a military defeat--north of the 16th Parallel--heavy enough to destabilize the regime in N'Djamena. Qadhafi is willing to sustain substantial human and material losses to topple Habre. Once the Libyans have at least partially recouped their losses, however, Tripoli may initiate a diplomatic effort with France to stabilize the situation.

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As long as the French stand in the way, Qadhafi is not likely to try to push south of the 16th Parallel to defeat Habre. Libyan strikes across that line so far have all been demonstrative--intended to signal the risks of attacking the Libyans in the north--and future raids are likely to be for the same purpose.

Meanwhile, Habre believes that the momentum is still with him and plans to continue to bleed the Libyan occupation force.

-- Working in concert with the Chadian rebels in the north that recently defected from the Libyan camp, Habre is orchestrating a campaign to harass

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[redacted]

the Libyans in the rugged Tibesti mountains.

-- Habre also appears to be considering an effort to overrun Ouadi Doum, the main supply head for the Libyan force and the only Libyan airfield south of the Aozou Strip capable of supporting fighter aircraft.

The Chadians will need regular resupply from France and the US to sustain operations in the north.

-- [redacted] that Habre's supply of anti-tank missiles was nearly exhausted in the Fada assault.

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-- Habre has asked France to step up its efforts to transport supplies to the front, including additional airdrops to guerrillas in the Tibesti mountains. [redacted]

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-- Habre continues to press Washington for Stinger air defense missiles, pointing to the increase in Libyan airstrikes over the last week. [redacted]

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Leaders in Paris continue to debate the desirable limit of French support to Habre's campaign. [redacted]

[redacted] French leaders are very pleased with N'Djamena's successes and remain committed to replenishing equipment expended in battle to date. They appear divided, however, on whether France should escalate its direct involvement north of the 16th Parallel.

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[redacted]

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-- [redacted] Paris [redacted]

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[redacted]

continues to be anxious to avoid action that will lead to direct French-Libyan confrontation or make an eventual negotiated settlement of the war more difficult to achieve. Paris is trying to find the level of force that can be exerted on the Libyans in Chad while avoiding Libyan retaliation against French forces and interests.

-- We do not believe, however, that Paris would agree to a settlement that would allow for a Libyan

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[REDACTED]

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presence south of the Aozou Strip. We believe that France--in accordance with its self-perception as patron of French-speaking Africa--will remain in Chad over the long term and continue to resist Libyan expansionism.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The French want to retain the lead in Chad, but have no desire to cooperate with the US in a more general campaign against Libya.

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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